

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 05090 01 OF 02 301344Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----018441 301347Z /43

O 301315Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9465
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 DAMASCUS 05090

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, MOPS, PINS, LE, SY, IS
SUBJECT: LEBANON SITUATION

REF: STATE 220266

SUMMARY: QADDOR ASSURES ME SYRIAN POLICY IN LEBANON UN-
CHANGED. NO INTENT TO CRUSH MARONITE MILITIAS. EXPRESS-
ED CONCERN THAT ANTI-SYRIAN DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN MAY
BE HAVING EFFECT ON USG ATTITUDE. I STRESSED NEED FOR
PUBLIC STATEMENT REAFFIRMING SYRIAN INTENTIONS FOLLOWING
BCHARRE CLASHES. ALSO RECOMMENDED UTILITY OF PUBLIC
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 DAMASC 05090 01 OF 02 301344Z

EXPRESSION OF WILLINGNESS MAKE PARTIAL WITHDRAWAL AS SOON
AS SITUATION PERMITS. QADDOR PROMISED CONVEY MY RE-
PRESENTATIONS TO ASSAD AND TO TRY TO FIND OUT DETAILS OF
BCHARRE. EXPECT RESPONSE WITHIN TWO DAYS.

1. I MET WITH ACTING FONMIN QADDOR THIS MORNING, ACCOM-
PANIED BY DCM NEWTON. EMPHASIZING THAT I WAS ACTING ON

INSTRUCTIONS, I REVIEWED WITH HIM MAJOR TALKING POINTS CONTAINED REFTEL. IN PARTICULAR I STRESSED THAT REOCCURRENCES OF THE FIGHTING, ESPECIALLY IN BCHARRE, HAD AROUSED INTENSE CONCERN IN UNITED STATES AS TO SYRIAN INTENTIONS. THESE EVENTS HAD CAUSED MANY PEOPLE, INCLUDING AMERICANS OF LEBANESE DESCENT FROM THAT AREA, TO WONDER WHETHER SYRIAN POLICY TOWARDS LEBANON HAD CHANGED. IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR US TO KNOW WHETHER THIS WAS THE CASE. IF NOT, ACTIONS MUST BE TAKEN TO CLARIFY PUBLICLY SYRIAN INTENTIONS. TWO RELATED POSSIBILITIES PRESENTED THEMSELVES: 1) THAT THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT MAKE A FORMAL PUBLIC STATEMENT EXPRESSING ITS INTENTION TO WITHDRAW TROOPS FROM LEBANON ONCE THE SECURITY SITUATION PERMITTED AND ONCE THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT SO REQUESTED; AND 2) THE SYRIANS ACTUALLY WITHDRAW SOME FORCES IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE, ASSUMING FAVORABLE SECURITY CONDITIONS, AS AN EARNEST OF THEIR ULTIMATE INTENTIONS.

2. QADDOR REASSURED ME THAT THERE HAD BEEN ABSOLUTELY NO CHANGE IN SYRIAN POLICY. SYRIA SUPPORTS THE LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON IN ITS ATTEMPTS TO EXERCISE ITS AUTHORITY OVER THE WHOLE COUNTRY. SYRIA SUPPORTS THE INDEPENDENCE, UNITY, AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF LEBANON. IT OPPOSES PARTITION AND BLOODSHED. ALTHOUGH HE WAS NOT AWARE OF THE DETAILS OF THE CLASHES IN BCHARRE, HE WISHED TO EMPHASIZE THAT THE ADF ACTED ONLY TO DEFEND ITSELF AND
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 DAMASC 05090 01 OF 02 301344Z

WHEN FORCED TO REPLY TO REPEATED PROVOCATIONS. HE WONDERED WHETHER THE USG NOW HAD A DIFFERENT VIEW OF THE SYRIAN ROLE?

3. I RESPONDED THAT FRANKLY RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NORTH, WHICH COULD BE SEEN AS AN ATTEMPT TO SPLIT THE MARONITE HEARTLAND, WERE CAUSING CONCERN IN VARIOUS QUARTERS. BESIDES THE MANY AMERICANS OF LEBANESE DESCENT, THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN LEBANON. MANY PEOPLE WERE BEGINNING TO THINK THAT SYRIA HAS ULTERIOR MOTIVES. I SAID THAT IF I WERE A MARONITE LIVING IN NORTHERN LEBANON, I WOULD SHARE THIS FEELING IN VIEW OF THE RECENT "PINCER" MOVEMENT. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT REASON WHY A PUBLIC STATEMENT ON SYRIAN INTENTIONS WOULD BE SO HELPFUL. IT WOULD HELP TO REASSURE PEOPLE BOTH IN THE WEST AND IN LEBANON.

4. QADDOR NOTED THAT HE HAD MANY TIMES EXPLAINED SYRIA'S POSITION TO BOTH AMBASSADOR MURPHY AND CHARGE PELLETREAU. UNFORTUNATELY, HE NOTED, RECENT OPENING OF THE PHALANGE OFFICE IN WASHINGTON SEEMED TO BE HAVING SOME EFFECT ON U.S. PUBLIC OPINION WHICH SUGGESTED THAT THE PHALANGIST

OFFICE WAS GETTING CONSIDERABLE EXPERT HELP FROM ISRAEL
AND ITS FRIENDS. AS BEFORE, HE WISHED TO STRESS THAT
MILITIAS REPRESENT ONLY A MINORITY FACTION OF THE CHRIS-
TIAN. SYRIA HAD MADE CONSIDERABLE SACRIFICS FOR LEBANON
AND WOULD CONTINUE TO DO SO. THE ROLE OF THE ADF WOULD
HOWEVER BECOME MUCH EASIER AND THE LEGITIMATE LEBANESE
GOVERNMENT WOULD BE MORE ABLE TO ESTABLISH ITS CONTROL OVER

SECRET

NNN

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 05090 02 OF 02 302230Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 DODE-00
CIAE-00 /026 W

-----030161 302234Z /64/47

O 301315Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9466

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 DAMASCUS 5090

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (CCY FOR OMITTED PARAS)

THE COUNTRY IF ISRAEL WOULD STOP SUPPORTING AND SUPPLYING
THE MARONITE MILITIAS. HE BELIEVED THAT THE ACTIVITIES OF
THE PHALANGIST OFFICE IN WASHINGTON AND RECENT ISRAELI
STATEMENTS THAT SYRIA WISHED TO CRUSH THE CHRISTIANS WERE
PART OF A SINGULAR PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN DESIGNED TO DISTORT
SYRIA'S TRUE INTENTIONS

5. I AGREED THAT SYRIA WAS SUFFERING A SERIOUS IMAGE
PROBLEM IN THE U.S. AND THE WORLD. THEREFORE I REITERATED
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 DAMASC 05090 02 OF 02 302230Z

THAT A PUBLIC STATEMENT THAT SYRIA WAS WILLING TO WITH-
DRAW ITS FORCES ONCE THE AUTHORITY OF THE LEBANESE STATE
WAS REESTABLISHED WOULD BE PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT. I BE-
LIEVED THAT IT WOULD ALSO BE USEFUL WERE SYRIA TO ANNOUNCE
ITS WILLINGNESS TO WITHDRAW AN INITIAL CONTINGENT OF ITS
FORCES ONCE THE SECURITY SITUATION IMPROVED SUFFICIENTLY.
SUCH STATEMENTS WOULD NOT ONLY IMPROVE SYRIA'S IMAGE BUT
WOULD ASSIST THE USG IN ITS REPRESENTATIONS TO THE
ISRAELIS IN THE CONTEXT OF CALMING THE LEBANESE SITUATION.
AT THE MOMENT IMPRESSIONS AND PERCEPTIONS ARE REALLY MORE
IMPORTANT THAN FACTS. WHATEVER THE PROVOCATIONS, IT IS
URGENTLY NECESSARY TO CLARIFY THE SITUATION AND ELIMINATE
THESE DANGEROUS MISPERCEPTIONS. THE MOVES WE SUGGESTED
WOULD HELP SYRIA CONVINCE OTHERS THAT ITS INTENTIONS IN
LEBANON ARE HONORABLE.

6. QADDOR UNDERTOOK TO CONVEY OUR CONCERNS TO THE
PRESIDENT. HE ALSO PROMISED TO PROVIDE US WITH MORE IN-
FORMATION ON THE BCHARRE EVENTS. HE READ WITH INTEREST
THE SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENT ON LEBANON OF AUGUST 29, WHICH
I HAD HANDED HIM.

7. RE DEPARTMENT'S REQUEST MEMBERS OF MY STAFF GET IN
TOUCH WITH OTHER CONTACTS, WILL BE FOLLOWING UP WITH
AVAILABLE FONMIN OFFICIALS. (MANY MFA OFFICIALS HAVE AL-
READY LEFT TOWN IN ANTICIPATION OF 'ID HOLIDAYS.) MEAN-
WHILE, I HAVE REQUESTED APPOINTMENT WITH DAUDI.

8. A. QADDOR LISTENED SYMPATHETICALLY BUT OF COURSE
LACKED AUTHORITY TO RESPOND IMMEDIATELY TO OUR RECOMMENDA-
TIONS. HE EXPECTED RESPONSE TO OUR PROPOSALS BY FRIDAY
AT THE LATEST WHEN KHADDAM IS SCHEDULED TO RETURN FROM
MOSCOW. QADDOR ALSO EXPECTED THAT I MIGHT BE ABLE TO
PRESENT MY CREDENTIALS TO ASSAD BEFORE PRESIDENT'S DEPAR-
TURE FOR WEST GERMANY, SCHEDULED FOR SEPT 9 OR THERE-

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 DAMASC 05090 02 OF 02 302230Z

ABOUTS).

- B. I AM PREPARED TO ACCEPT THAT ASSAD'S POLICY IN
LEBANON HAS NOT CHANGED, I.E., THAT IT REMAINS ONE OF SEEK-
ING TO RESTORE UNITY AND STABILITY IN LEBANON WITH AN IM-
PORTANT DEGREE OF SYRIAN INFLUENCE ULTIMATELY REMAINING,
RATHER THAN, AS SOME OTHERS SUSPECT, TO ANNEX OR SOMEHOW
IMPOSE A DIKTAT ON LEBANON. THE SUGGESTION HEARD IN

SOME QUARTERS THAT SYRIA IS OUT TO "CRUSH" THE MARONITES IN THE SENSE OF RENDERING THEM POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY IMPOTENT IS, I BELIEVE, AN EXAGGERATION. WHAT THE SYRIANS ARE ENDEAVORING TO DO IS TO DE-FANG THE MAJOR OBSTACLE TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THEIR MISSION OF RESTORING LAW AND ORDER: THE RIGHT-WING MARONITE MILITIA. IF THE LATTER WERE TO LAY DOWN, BUT NOT NECESSARILY GIVE UP, THEIR ARMS, AND WERE THEY TO ALLOW THE ADF TO SERVE EFFECTIVELY AS LEBANON'S SECURITY FORCE UNTIL THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT IS ABLE TO DO THE JOB ON ITS OWN, I BELIEVE THE SYRIANS WOULD NOT ONLY BE WILLING BUT DESIROUS THAT THE MARONITES (EXCLUDING, OF COURSE, EXTREMISTS LIKE CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND BESHIR GEMAYEL) CONTINUE TO PLAY A ROLE, THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY THE DOMINANT ONE, ON THE LEBANESE POLITICAL SCENE. THE SYRIANS DO NOT REPEAT NOT WANT THE LEBANESE SECTARIAN EQUILIBRIUM THROWN OUT OF KILTER, THOUGH THEY NO DOUBT ACKNOWLEDGE AND PROBABLY APPROVE THE FACT THAT THE FORMER PREPONDERANT MARONITE POSITION IN LEBANON IS JUST NO LONGER IN THE CARDS. I SUBMIT, THEREFORE, THAT THE RECENT SYRIAN INCURSIONS INTO NORTHERN LEBANON, THREATENING TO OUTFLANK THE MARONITE MILITIA IN EAST BEIRUT, ARE A FUNCTION OF SYRIA'S FRUSTRATING SECURITY ROLE RATHER THAN THE RESULT OF A POLITICAL DECISION EITHER TO "ANNIHILATE" THE MARONITES OR TO ANNEX LEBANON. (ACCORDING TO FBIS, ADF HAS STATED THAT THE UNITS INVOLVED EXCEEDED THEIR INSTRUCTIONS AND THAT THE INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED ARE BEING INVESTIGATED.)

- C. WHETHER THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT WILL ISSUE THE KIND OF PUBLIC STATEMENT WE SEEK IS MOOT. IF THEY DON'T, IT
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 DAMASC 05090 02 OF 02 302230Z

IS FOR NO LACK OF OUR TRYING. I HIT QADDOR VERY HARD ON THIS AND KEPT COMING BACK TO THE POINT. WHILE HE SEEMED TO APPRECIATE THAT SUCH A STATEMENT WOULD BE IN SYRIA'S INTERESTS, I FEAR THAT IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT, IN TYPICAL SHORTSIGHTEDNESS, WILL NOT RESPOND FOR THEIR OWN REASONS--INCLUDING THEIR CONCERN THAT SUCH A STATEMENT WOULD STRENGTHEN THE HANDS OF THE RIGHT-WING MARONITES. SEELYE

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TROOP DEPLOYMENT, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978DAMASC05090
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780354-0247
Format: TEL
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780810/aaaaahry.tel
Line Count: 267
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 8eb48457-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 78 STATE 220266
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1538287
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANON SITUATION
TAGS: PEPR, MOPS, PINS, LE, SY, IS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/8eb48457-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014